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SUBJECT: ANBAR LOOKS AHEAD TO AN ORDERLY ELECTION, AND A
TRANSITION

REF: A. 08 BAGHDAD 3928
[1](#)B. 08 BAGHDAD 3871
[1](#)C. 08 BAGHDAD 3677
[1](#)D. 08 BAGHDAD 3626
[1](#)E. 08 BAGHDAD 3620
[1](#)F. 08 BAGHDAD 2953

Classified By: PRT ANBAR LEADER JAMES SORIANO FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Anbar reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: Anbar is on track for an orderly election, according to recent soundings of the Governorate Elections Officer (GEO) and local security officials. The GEO says that the parties have thus far brought only minor campaign infractions to his attention. Anbar's clerics are encouraging citizens to vote, a turn-around from the January 2005 provincial election which was widely boycotted. In recent polls, high levels of dissatisfaction with the provincial government and with essential services mark the public mood in the waning days of the campaign. Tribal affiliation and technocratic credentials are dominant campaign themes. The once-dominant governing Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) has entered into a coalition with a tribal political entity; it is not running under its own name. It appears that the election will result in the IIP's relinquishment its 2005-08 control over the Provincial Council as other parties are expected to win Council seats. END SUMMARY.

ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

[1](#)3. (SBU) Anbar Province is on track for an orderly election, according to our soundings over the past week with the Governorate Electoral Office, security officials, and clerics. GEO Director Khalid Rajab told us at a January 15 meeting in his Ramadi office that the campaign period to date has been uneventful and "calm." He did not raise any major security concerns as potential issues and believes that campaigning will remain orderly for election day (Refs B through E).

[1](#)4. (SBU) Khalid said that he met recently with representatives from ten political entities to discuss "minor campaign violations." The most common infraction, he said, was the display of campaign posters on government buildings. He specifically noted that he has cited the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and its main opposition, the Iraq Awakening Conference, or Muatamar Sahwa Al-Iraq (MSI), for such violations. Thousands of campaign posters and banners are posted throughout the city, but the walls around the provincial government center appear to be poster-free.

[1](#)5. (C) Khalid later participated in a Provincial Security Council meeting hosted by the Commanding General at Camp Ramadi on January 20 to review security planning. During the two-hour meeting, Khalid and Iraqi police and army officials

discussed election-related security plans, logistics for transporting election materials to and from the polling sites, and related issues. Overall, the security officials appeared to be prepared for election day, and it was apparent that Khalid's office has been coordinating with them.

THE MOSQUE

¶6. (SBU) Khalid pointed out that Anbar's office of the Sunni Endowment has issued a fatwa permitting Sunnis to vote in the upcoming elections. Such a development contrasts favorably to the position of the mosque in January 2005 when many preachers urged a boycott of the polls in the provincial elections of that year.

¶7. (SBU) The head of the Sunni Endowment, Sheikh Abdullah Jallal, acknowledged to us on January 19 that the province's clerics support wide participation in the election, describing it as the province's first democratic one. His associate, theologian Dr. Thamer Ibrahim Thaher, echoed the sentiment, saying that having a democratic election "is a Qsentiment, saying that having a democratic election "is a victory in itself." Abdullah and Thamer will visit the U.S. as part of the International Visitor Program.

THE PUBLIC MOOD

¶8. (C) Going into the final two weeks of the campaign, high levels of dissatisfaction with the performance of local and

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national governments looms on the mind of the average voter. A Gallup survey of some 2,400 Anbaris taken in December indicates that 67 percent of those polled strongly disagreed with the statement that the "provincial government represents interests of people like you." A similar reading was obtained to a question about the national government.

¶9. (C) On economic issues, 98 percent of those polled said that they were "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with job availability. Clean water had the highest dissatisfaction score in the essential services category. Some 92 per cent of those polled said that they were at least "somewhat dissatisfied" with the availability of clean water. Sewage had the second highest dissatisfaction score, with 89 per cent of the respondents saying that they were at least "somewhat dissatisfied" with the availability of sewage services. Electricity services drew a 75 percent dissatisfaction rate.

¶10. (C) Such attitudes are not a revelation; they have been apparent as long as such polls have been taken. Nonetheless, high levels of dissatisfaction about responsive government, jobs, and essential services are on the minds of the citizens as election day approaches.

GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEES

¶11. (C) Although the election is for the Provincial Council, some parties have gone as far as nominating candidates for governor. MSI president Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha has presented Qassim Al-Fahadawi for the top executive job. Qassim is supported by the Fahad tribe and has extensive business and engineering experience. Meanwhile, the Iraqi Tribes List, consisting of former MSI insiders and affiliates, has tipped Moyad Al-Thiyabi for governor. Moyad was formerly MSI's secretary general and is a deputy Governor Ma'amoun Sami Rasheed (REFS A, F).

POLITICS

¶12. (C) It is clear that the IIP's control of the Provincial Council will end after the ballot count. The chief reason is that the party is not fielding an independent list; it has formed a bloc with a tribal-based entity called the Coalition of Intellectuals and Tribes for Development (CITD), led by Sheikh Amer Abdul al-Sulayman al-Assafi, one of Anbar's most prominent sheikhs. In other words, due to its unpopularity as the main incumbent party, IIP is not running as a political brand, or burnishing its religion-based credentials. Instead, it is emphasizing its tribal connections (REF A).

¶13. (C) Meanwhile MSI, the IIP's main rival, has formed a bloc with the smaller National Independent Gathering, a technocratic grouping with ties to Anbar University. The move to embrace technocrats no doubt reflects MSI's perceived vulnerability among voters of being a party of modestly educated tribal leaders. As noted above, former MSI supporters have split off to form a rival political party. It is not clear how that fragmentation will play out on election day, but in the words of one tribal leader, "the tribes are splintered." (REF A.)

¶14. (C) Thus, MSI and the IIP appear to have moved in opposite directions in their election strategies -- the IIP, previously the political home to many Anbari technocrats, has taken on a tribal identity, whereas MSI, originally a tribal security organization, has moved to appeal to technocrats (REF A).

¶15. (C) The IIP and MSI are among 37 political entities on the January ballot. Most are microscopic, but some of them, such as The Reform and Development Party and the Iraqi National Dialogue Front, may get enough votes to win seats on the new council. Over the past several months, we have spoken with more than 15 of these parties, and our impression is that they tend to be pragmatic in outlook, and cite improving the local quality of life among their main concerns. The views of Mohammed Fathi Abd Hantosh, head of The Reform and Development Party, are typical of those we heard. He talks of his party's intent to rebuild the province through investment in agriculture and improving basic services.

LOOKING AHEAD

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¶16. (C) Although it is not possible to predict the election results, we can begin to discern the general shape of the political future of the province:

-- The election campaign appears to be orderly apart from minor complaints about infractions. The Anbaris are looking forward to the poll. Some 360,000 residents have verified their voter registration, a number that is one hundred times the size of the electorate in the boycotted January 2005 provincial election. Today most Anbaris realize that the election boycott was a strategic blunder.

-- The mosque, which played a role in fomenting insurrection in 2005-06, has endorsed the election.

-- Tribal affiliation and technocratic credentials have been dominant themes in the campaign. To date there has been practically no evidence of pan-Arab, Islamist, or anti-Shi'a rhetoric.

-- The IIP will relinquish control of the Provincial Council. The period of one-party dominance of the Council is over.

Political power on the new council will likely be diffused among a coalition of several entities and parties, including some of the smaller parties.

-- The council's new leadership will likely be pragmatic in outlook, thus continuing the present council's accommodation with the GOI and open cooperation with Coalition Forces.

CROCKER